

The Relevance of Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta Philosophy in the Age of Mental Anxiety and Fragmentation

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Abstract— *The contemporary world is increasingly characterized by psychological instability, emotional fragmentation, existential uncertainty, and spiritual alienation. In the midst of technological advancement and material progress, modern humanity continues to suffer from anxiety, depression, restlessness, and a persistent crisis of meaning. Ancient Indian philosophical traditions, particularly the Vedic hymns, offer profound reflections on the nature of consciousness and mental harmony that remain relevant in contemporary times. The Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta, found in the Yajurveda, is one such philosophical and spiritual composition that explores the sanctity, discipline, and transformative potential of the human mind. Through repeated invocations for an auspicious and enlightened consciousness, the hymn foregrounds the idea that the mind is both the source of bondage and liberation. This paper examines the relevance of the Śiva Saṅkalpa philosophy in the contemporary age marked by mental anxiety and social fragmentation. By employing textual analysis, philosophical interpretation, and interdisciplinary reflection, the article investigates how the hymn conceptualizes the mind as a sacred and stabilizing force. The study further explores how Vedic notions of mental discipline, ethical consciousness, and spiritual harmony can contribute to contemporary discourses on psychological wellbeing and existential healing. The article argues that the Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta offers not merely religious instruction but also a timeless philosophy of inner integration capable of addressing the fragmented condition of modern existence.*



Keywords— *Śiva Saṅkalpa, Vedic philosophy, consciousness, mental anxiety, fragmentation, spirituality, mind, Indian philosophy.*

Introduction

The Vedic literature constitutes the foundation of Sanskrit literature and remains one of the richest repositories of humanity, morality, spirituality, and philosophical inquiry (Radhakrishnan 21). The term “Vedic literature” refers to the body of sacred texts derived from the Vedas and includes the four Vedas or Samhitas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas, and the Upanishads (Dasgupta 14). Among these, the *Rg-Veda*, *Samaveda*, and *Yajurveda* are collectively known as *Vedatrayi*, while the *Atharvaveda* is regarded as a later addition. The *Rg-Veda*, considered the oldest among all Vedas, contains 1028 hymns divided into ten mandalas and forms the basis of subsequent Vedic thought and literature.

The Vedas are not merely literary monuments but living foundations of Indian religious and cultural consciousness (Flood 35). Unlike ordinary literary works, the Vedas are regarded as *apauruṣeya*—not composed by any human agency (Rao 52). The Vedic mantras are believed to have originated through the intuitive vision (*darśana*) and spiritual hearing (*śruti*) of inspired seers who experienced eternal truth directly. Hence, the Vedas occupy the highest position in the Hindu religio-philosophical tradition, transcending the limitations of ordinary sensory perception and intellectual reasoning.

The oral transmission of the Vedas from teacher to disciple preserved these texts in remarkably pure form across centuries (Aurobindo 67). Religion, philosophy, ethics,

science, music, ritual, aesthetics, and social thought all trace their origins to Vedic sources. The hymns of the *Rg-Veda* continue to be recited in ceremonies, rituals, marriages, temple consecrations, and spiritual practices even today, testifying to the enduring vitality of Vedic culture.

Within this vast Vedic corpus, the *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta* occupies a highly significant place (*Yajurveda* 214). The hymn forms the first six mantras of the thirty-fourth chapter of the *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā* of the *Śukla Yajurveda* and also appears in the *Rudrāṣṭādhyāyī*. The term *saṅkalpa* signifies will, determination, right intention, or auspicious resolve. The repeated refrain “Tan me manaḥ śiva saṅkalpam astu” (“May my mind be filled with auspicious thoughts”) foregrounds the transformative power of consciousness (*Yajurveda* 215).

The *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta* is simultaneously philosophical, spiritual, psychological, and literary. Although part of the *karmakāṇḍa* tradition, the hymn possesses profound *adhyātmic* significance and is sometimes regarded as an Upanishadic text in itself. The six verses celebrate the glory of the mind, describing its capacity to wander through waking, dreaming, and deep sleep states, illuminate knowledge, perform rituals, and guide human destiny. The hymn recognizes that the mind possesses the potential for both bondage and liberation.

The modern world is frequently celebrated as an age of scientific achievement, technological innovation, and global interconnectedness (Jung 44). However, beneath the surface of material progress lies an unprecedented psychological crisis. Human beings today are increasingly confronted with emotional exhaustion, loneliness, anxiety disorders, depression, and existential fragmentation. Rapid urbanization, hyper-competition, digital dependency, and the erosion of spiritual values have intensified mental instability across societies. The contemporary individual often experiences a profound disconnect between external success and internal fulfillment.

In such a context, ancient philosophical traditions become important reservoirs of wisdom capable of offering alternative paradigms for mental and spiritual wellbeing. Indian philosophical literature, particularly the Vedic corpus, contains profound reflections on consciousness, ethics, selfhood, and cosmic harmony. Among these texts, the *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta* occupies a distinctive position because of its intense focus on the mind (*manas*) as the centre of human experience and transformation.

The *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta*, traditionally associated with the *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā* of the *Yajurveda*, consists of six mantras ending with the repeated prayer: “Tan me manaḥ śiva saṅkalpam astu” (“May my mind be filled with auspicious resolve”). The repetition itself underscores the

centrality of consciousness in shaping ethical action, spiritual awareness, and psychological balance. The hymn presents the mind not merely as a cognitive instrument but as a sacred force capable of transcending fear, confusion, and fragmentation.

The philosophical significance of the hymn lies in its holistic understanding of human consciousness. Unlike modern materialist frameworks that often reduce mental processes to biological or neurological mechanisms, the *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta* regards the mind as deeply interconnected with cosmic order, moral responsibility, and spiritual realization. Such a perspective becomes particularly relevant in the present age where human consciousness is increasingly fragmented by consumerism, digital distractions, and emotional alienation.

This paper seeks to examine the contemporary relevance of the *Śiva Saṅkalpa* philosophy in addressing mental anxiety and existential fragmentation. Through textual and philosophical analysis, the study explores how the hymn conceptualizes the mind as a source of inner harmony and ethical consciousness. The article further argues that the *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta* provides a spiritual psychology that remains remarkably relevant in the twenty-first century.

The Philosophical Foundation of Śiva Saṅkalpa

The philosophical basis of the *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta* emerges directly from the Vedic understanding of consciousness and reality. The Vedas regard the mind not merely as a psychological faculty but as a sacred medium connecting humanity with cosmic truth. In Vedic thought, scriptural authority (*śabda*) is considered superior to sensory perception (*pratyakṣa*) and logical inference (*anumāna*) because the Vedas are believed to arise from supra-human insight.

The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* describes ultimate reality as that “wherefrom words turn back together with the mind, not having attained it.” This conception reveals both the limitations and the profundity of the human mind. While ordinary consciousness remains bound within worldly existence, disciplined consciousness can become a vehicle for transcendence.

The *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta* reflects this larger Vedic worldview. The hymn conceptualizes the mind as luminous, expansive, and dynamic. It recognizes the extraordinary power of thought and intention in shaping human destiny. The Sanskrit dictum “Yad Bhāvam Tad Bhavati” from the *Mundaka Upaniṣad*—“As you think, so you become”—resonates strongly with the philosophy of the hymn (Easwaran 188). The repeated prayer for auspicious thought underscores the Vedic conviction that consciousness determines reality.

The English poet John Milton similarly observes in *Paradise Lost* that “The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven” (Milton 98). Although emerging from entirely different cultural traditions, Milton’s insight parallels the Vedic understanding of the transformative and determinative power of the mind.

The six mantras of the hymn collectively present a sophisticated spiritual psychology:

1. The first mantra describes the mind as a far wanderer moving through waking, dream, and deep sleep states while simultaneously functioning as the light of consciousness.
2. The second mantra identifies the mind as the means through which human beings perform yajñas and righteous action.
3. The third mantra presents the mind as immortal, intelligent, and indispensable for all activity.
4. The fourth mantra associates the mind with temporal consciousness and spiritual immortality.
5. The fifth mantra symbolically compares the Vedic tradition to the spokes of a chariot wheel established in the mind.
6. The sixth mantra portrays the mind as a wise charioteer capable of guiding the individual toward higher realization.

The imagery of the chariot is particularly significant because it recalls the *Katha Upanishad*, where the body is described as a chariot, the senses as horses, and the mind as the reins controlling them (*Katha Upanishad* 1.3.3–9). Such symbolism emphasizes discipline, self-control, and ethical consciousness as prerequisites for spiritual liberation.

The hymn therefore establishes the mind as the centre of cognition, ethics, ritual action, imagination, and spiritual transcendence.

The term “Śiva Saṅkalpa” can be interpreted as “auspicious determination” or “benevolent consciousness.” The Sanskrit word *Śiva* signifies welfare, auspiciousness, peace, and transformative power, while *saṅkalpa* refers to intention, resolve, or mental orientation. Thus, the phrase collectively denotes a purified and elevated state of consciousness directed toward harmony and truth.

The recurring refrain of the hymn—“Tan me manah śiva saṅkalpam astu”—reveals the Vedic understanding that the quality of one’s mind determines the quality of one’s life. The hymn repeatedly invokes the mind as a sacred faculty capable of transcending limitations and attaining spiritual illumination. Rather than suppressing the mind, the text seeks to refine and align it with cosmic and ethical order.

One of the major philosophical contributions of the *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta* is its recognition of the mind as both dynamic and expansive. The hymn describes the mind as capable of traversing vast distances, connecting past, present, and future, and functioning as the foundation of human consciousness. Such a conception anticipates later developments in Indian philosophy where the mind becomes central to metaphysical and spiritual inquiry.

In the Upanishadic tradition, the mind is frequently regarded as the mediator between sensory experience and spiritual realization. The *Katha Upanishad* compares the body to a chariot and the mind to the reins controlling the senses and intellect. Similarly, the *Bhagavad Gita* emphasizes that the uncontrolled mind becomes an enemy, while the disciplined mind becomes a friend. The *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta* belongs to this broader philosophical tradition that foregrounds the transformative potential of disciplined consciousness.

The hymn also reflects the Vedic belief in the interconnectedness of the individual and the cosmos. Human consciousness is not isolated but participates in a larger cosmic order. Mental harmony, therefore, is not merely a personal achievement but part of universal wellbeing. Such an understanding stands in sharp contrast to the fragmented and individualistic tendencies of modern society.

Mental Anxiety and the Crisis of Modern Consciousness

Mental anxiety has emerged as one of the defining conditions of contemporary civilization (Kierkegaard 61). Despite advancements in medicine, communication, and economic systems, modern individuals increasingly struggle with emotional instability and psychological distress. Anxiety disorders, depression, and stress-related illnesses have become global concerns.

The causes of contemporary mental anxiety are complex and multidimensional. The acceleration of modern life, excessive competition, social isolation, economic insecurity, and digital overstimulation have profoundly altered human consciousness. Social media culture intensifies comparison, insecurity, and alienation, while consumerist ideologies equate happiness with material acquisition. Consequently, individuals often experience an internal emptiness despite external achievement.

Another significant factor contributing to modern anxiety is the erosion of spiritual and ethical foundations. Traditional communities and collective value systems have weakened under the pressures of globalization and urbanization. Human relationships are increasingly mediated by technology, resulting in emotional detachment and loneliness.

Existential thinkers such as Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, and Jean-Paul Sartre identified anxiety as an intrinsic feature of modern existence. Kierkegaard viewed anxiety as the dizziness of freedom, while Heidegger associated it with alienation from authentic being. Although these philosophical traditions emerge from different cultural contexts, they resonate with the concerns addressed in the *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta*. Both traditions recognize the instability of human consciousness and the need for inner grounding.

However, the Vedic approach differs significantly in its solution. Whereas existential philosophy often emphasizes absurdity or alienation, the *Śiva Saṅkalpa* philosophy proposes harmony through disciplined consciousness and spiritual integration. The hymn suggests that mental suffering arises not merely from external conditions but from the fragmentation of consciousness itself.

The contemporary condition can therefore be understood as a crisis of consciousness. Human beings possess unprecedented technological power yet remain internally fragmented. The mind, instead of functioning as a source of clarity and stability, becomes overwhelmed by fear, distraction, and confusion. In this context, the philosophy of *Śiva Saṅkalpa* acquires renewed relevance.

The Sacredness of Mind in the Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta

The *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta* presents a deeply sacred understanding of the mind. The hymn does not perceive consciousness merely as a psychological mechanism but as a divine and transformative force. The repeated invocation for an auspicious mind suggests that mental purity is essential for ethical and spiritual wellbeing.

In one of the mantras, the mind is described as the force through which human beings perform actions, acquire knowledge, and engage with the world. The hymn therefore recognizes the mind as the centre of human agency. Every ethical action, creative endeavor, and spiritual realization emerges from the quality of consciousness.

The sacredness of the mind also implies responsibility. Since the mind shapes human perception and action, its purification becomes essential for individual and collective harmony. The *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta* repeatedly seeks a consciousness free from negativity, violence, and confusion.

This idea bears remarkable relevance in the present age where mental unrest often manifests in social violence, intolerance, and ecological destruction. Fragmented consciousness not only harms the individual but also destabilizes society. The hymn implicitly suggests that social transformation begins with inner transformation.

The sacred conception of mind further challenges reductionist approaches dominant in modern discourse. Contemporary society often prioritizes productivity and external achievement while neglecting inner cultivation. The *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta*, by contrast, foregrounds introspection, mindfulness, and ethical awareness as foundations of human fulfillment.

The hymn also anticipates modern psychological insights regarding the power of thought patterns. Contemporary cognitive psychology acknowledges that repeated mental habits influence emotional wellbeing and behavior. Similarly, the Vedic hymn emphasizes the importance of cultivating auspicious intentions and disciplined consciousness.

Śiva Saṅkalpa and Spiritual Psychology

The *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta* can also be interpreted as a form of spiritual psychology. Unlike modern psychology, which often focuses on pathology and behavior, spiritual psychology integrates consciousness, ethics, and transcendence.

The repeated prayer for auspicious resolve functions as a meditative affirmation aimed at restructuring consciousness. Repetition in Vedic traditions serves not merely ritualistic purposes but psychological and spiritual transformation. By repeatedly invoking a purified mind, the practitioner gradually internalizes values of peace, harmony, and self-awareness.

The hymn further recognizes the mobility and complexity of the human mind. It acknowledges that the mind can wander across temporal and spatial boundaries, often becoming restless and unstable. Such observations parallel contemporary understandings of anxiety where uncontrolled thought patterns generate emotional distress.

However, the *Śiva Saṅkalpa* philosophy does not advocate suppression of thought. Instead, it emphasizes alignment of consciousness with higher principles. This approach resembles certain aspects of mindfulness-based therapeutic practices where awareness and disciplined attention become means of psychological healing.

Carl Jung's concept of individuation also provides an interesting comparative framework (Jung 156). Jung believed that psychological health depends upon the integration of fragmented aspects of the self. Similarly, the *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūktaseeks* the harmonization of consciousness through spiritual awareness.

Furthermore, the hymn implicitly critiques the modern obsession with externality. Contemporary culture encourages constant stimulation and distraction, leaving little room for introspection. The Vedic perspective,

however, insists that genuine wellbeing emerges from inner equilibrium rather than external accumulation.

Thus, the *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta* offers a holistic psychology that integrates mental discipline, ethical consciousness, and spiritual transcendence.

Relevance in the Contemporary World

The relevance of the *Śiva Saṅkalpa* philosophy in contemporary society lies in its ability to address the psychological and spiritual crises of modernity. In an age marked by anxiety, fragmentation, and existential emptiness, the hymn provides a framework for restoring inner harmony.

First, the text emphasizes mental discipline and self-awareness. Contemporary individuals are constantly exposed to information overload and digital distraction, resulting in diminished concentration and emotional instability. The Vedic emphasis on focused consciousness encourages mindfulness and introspection.

Second, the hymn promotes ethical consciousness. Modern society often prioritizes individual success over collective wellbeing. Such a worldview intensifies competition, alienation, and social fragmentation. The *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta*, by contrast, foregrounds auspicious intention and universal harmony.

Third, the philosophy of the hymn encourages spiritual resilience. Contemporary anxiety frequently arises from uncertainty and fear regarding identity, purpose, and mortality. The Vedic worldview offers a broader cosmic perspective in which human existence becomes interconnected with universal consciousness.

Fourth, the hymn possesses therapeutic significance. Chanting and meditative repetition have been shown to reduce stress and promote emotional stability. Although the hymn originates within a sacred context, its psychological insights transcend religious boundaries.

The *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta* is also relevant in educational contexts. Contemporary education systems often prioritize technical skills while neglecting emotional and ethical development. Integrating philosophical and contemplative traditions into education could contribute to more balanced forms of human development.

Moreover, the hymn's emphasis on inner harmony possesses ecological implications. Modern ecological crises are rooted partly in fragmented consciousness and exploitative attitudes toward nature. The Vedic understanding of interconnectedness encourages a more harmonious relationship between humanity and the natural world.

Thus, the *Śiva Saṅkalpa* philosophy remains deeply relevant not merely as an ancient religious text but as a living philosophy capable of addressing contemporary crises.

Apart from its philosophical significance, the *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta* also possesses remarkable literary and aesthetic qualities. The repetitive refrain creates a rhythmic and meditative structure that enhances the spiritual intensity of the hymn.

Vedic literature frequently employs symbolic and poetic language to communicate philosophical truths. In the *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta*, the mind is represented through images of movement, illumination, and expansiveness. Such imagery transforms abstract philosophical ideas into experiential realities.

The aesthetic power of repetition is especially important. The recurring invocation "Tan me manaḥ śiva saṅkalpam astu" functions simultaneously as prayer, affirmation, and poetic refrain. The repetition gradually intensifies emotional resonance and contemplative depth.

CONCLUSION

The *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta* remains one of the most profound reflections on consciousness within the Vedic tradition (Zimmer 201). Its repeated invocation for an auspicious and disciplined mind reflects a deep understanding of the centrality of consciousness in human existence. In an age characterized by mental anxiety, emotional fragmentation, and spiritual alienation, the philosophy of *Śiva Saṅkalpa* offers remarkable relevance.

The hymn recognizes that external progress alone cannot ensure human fulfillment. Genuine wellbeing requires inner harmony, ethical awareness, and spiritual integration. By presenting the mind as sacred, transformative, and interconnected with cosmic order, the *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta* challenges the fragmented consciousness of modernity.

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba observes that one must "master the mind and be a mastermind," emphasizing that true peace and self-realization emerge not from external control but from mastery over one's own thoughts and consciousness (Sai Baba 74). Similarly, the text offers valuable insights for contemporary psychology, education, ethics, and spirituality. Its emphasis on disciplined consciousness anticipates modern therapeutic practices while simultaneously transcending purely materialistic frameworks.

The enduring relevance of the *Śiva Saṅkalpa* philosophy lies in its universal vision of human consciousness. The hymn reminds humanity that peace cannot be achieved solely through external structures but must emerge from the

cultivation of an auspicious and enlightened mind. In this sense, the *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta* continues to function not merely as an ancient Vedic hymn but as a timeless guide for psychological balance, ethical living, and spiritual awakening.

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